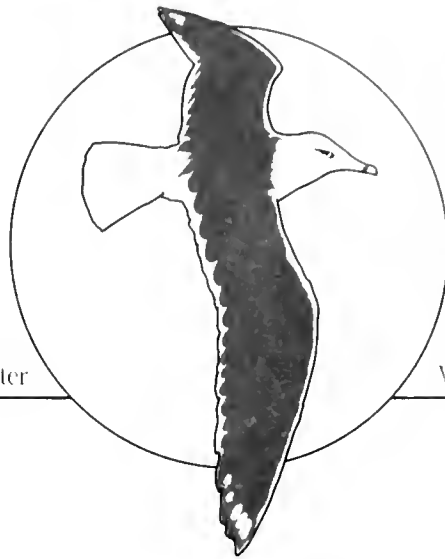


The Gull



JUL 24 2000

Golden Gate Audubon Society Newsletter

Volume 80, No 3 March 1998

GGAS Works Out for Wetlands

*Seed Sale
see page 9*

On Saturday January 24, a hearty band of GGAS volunteers attacked and conquered the non-native cordgrass that is threatening Arrowhead Marsh at the Martin Luther King Regional Shoreline Park in San Leandro Bay.

Cordgrass is one of the most important plants in the tidal marsh wetland community. As a plant, it is more productive than wheat and it provides food and shelter for many of the creatures

inhabiting our aquatic environment.

But our native cordgrass, *Spartina foliosa*, is much different from the eastern cordgrass, *Spartina alterniflora*. The eastern cordgrass grows much more densely and covers more of a tidal area's mudflats than does our native cordgrass.

Eastern cordgrass was mistakenly released in a wetland restoration project in San Francisco Bay 15 or 20 years ago, and it has begun to spread all over the

Bay. As it spreads, it reduces mudflat areas and thus reduces important shorebird feeding areas because shorebirds feed on mudflats. It also chokes tidal channels, and these are the channels used by the endangered California Clapper Rail.

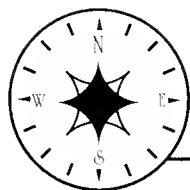
At Arrowhead Marsh, we are attempting to restore Clapper Rail habitat, and we sure don't want the eastern cordgrass coming in and ruining our restoration project.

So on a Saturday afternoon in January, 12 GGAS volunteers braved

Continued on page 5



PHOTO BY ARTHUR FEINSTEIN



Field Trips Calendar

GAS field trips are conducted by experienced birders who wish to share their knowledge and love of birds with others. All trips are free of charge (except for entrance fees that may be charged by regional, state, or national parks) and are open to everyone, regardless of membership in the National Audubon Society or Golden Gate chapter.

SUNDAY, MARCH 1 STRYBING ARBORETUM.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna (415) 566-3241.

SATURDAY, MARCH 7 WOODBIDGE ROAD ECOLOGICAL AREA, SAN JOAQUIN DELTA AREA.

Meet at 9:00 a.m. at the intersection of I-5 and Hwy. 12, west of Lodi. See February Gull for trip details. Rain cancels trip. Leader: Jim Rowoth (209) 462-7512.

WEDNESDAY MARCH 11 MINI-TRIP TO MITCHELL CANYON.

Meet at 9:30 a.m. See February Gull for directions and details. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301 and Jean-Marie Spoelman. (\$)

SATURDAY MARCH 14 LAS GALLINAS SEWER PONDS, MARIN COUNTY.

Meet at 8:00 a.m. at the parking lot. See February Gull for directions and details. Leader: Hugh Cotter (415) 752-6776.

SUNDAY MARCH 15 BOLINAS LAGOON AND AREA.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. at the parking lot across the street from the grocery store in downtown Stinson Beach, at the intersection of Calle Del Mar and Hwy. 1. See February Gull for description of this all day trip. Heavy rain cancels. Leader: Ken Burton (415) 669-1847.

SATURDAY, MARCH 21 WHITE SLOUGH AREA, VALLEJO, SOLANO COUNTY.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwy. 37 (aka Hwy. Marine World Parkway) and Sacramento Street in Vallejo. From Oakland, take I-80 North to Vallejo. Take the 37 exit west to Sacramento Street. Numerous shorebirds, ducks, and other species spend the winter in the northern portion of San Francisco Bay. We will bird until around 2. Bring lunch or snacks. Leader: Robin Leong (707) 643-1287.

SUNDAY, MARCH 22 RICHARDSON BAY WILDLIFE SANCTUARY.

Meet at 10 a.m. at Audubon Center in the Wildlife Sanctuary, 376 Greenwood Rd. in Tiburon. Take Hwy 101 to the Tiburon Exit (Rt. 131). Turn toward Tiburon on Tiburon Blvd. and go about one mile to Greenwood Cove Rd. Turn right and follow the road about 0.2 mile. You will see a sign on the right that says Richardson Bay Audubon Center Sanctuary. Please park on the street. We will enjoy a 45-minute slide show in the classroom, then from 11 to 12 look for birds along the trail and along Richardson Bay shoreline,

followed by a brief tour of the historic Lyford House (always a highlight). After lunch, we will probably carpool to the Corte Madera shoreline for more waterfowl. Trip will end about 2:30. Bring lunch. Beginners welcome. Leader: Ranger Bill Bixby (415) 388-2524, Wed-Sun., daytime.



SATURDAY MARCH 28 SAN FRANCISCO BIRD BLITZ.

Meet at 7 a.m. sharp at the north end of Van Ness Ave. (past North Point - the last cross street) at the foot of Municipal Pier. From there we will caravan to other sites. Bring lunch and liquids. We will bird until dusk, then adjourn to a restaurant for dinner to recap the day's observations and for a minimal cost, avoid going home to cook. See February Gull for trip description. Leader: Alan Hopkins (415) 664-0983 (*)

SATURDAY APRIL 4 SUNOL REGIONAL PARK.

Meet at 8:30 a.m. inside the park entrance at the parking lot on the left. Take I-680 south to about 8 miles beyond the intersection of Hwy. 580, and turn off at Calaveras Rd. Go south (left) and follow the signs to Sunol Regional Park, about 5 miles.

Bring lunch and liquids (no alcoholic beverages). We should see Golden Eagles, a variety of winter residents, and early migrants. This trip is also good for wildflowers. Leader: Ron Lindeman (510) 521-2524 \$(*)

SATURDAY, APRIL 4 BREEDING BIRDS OF SAN FRANCISCO.

Most of our summer breeding species will be in residence. Many male birds will be singing or displaying. Some hummingbirds will be on their second broods. There will be a few lingering winter residents (like wigeon and scoter) but expect the mockingbird, White-crowned Sparrow, Brewer's Blackbird, Hooded Oriole, Marsh Wren, Barn Swallow, Common Raven, and many other summer species to be territorial and vocal. We'll study where each species nests and some nest types. Meet at 8:30 a.m. in the Land's End parking lot on Merrie Way just east of the Cliff House. Trip will end at noon. Leader: Harry Fuller (415) 668-8229 (*)

SUNDAY, APRIL 5 STRYBING ARBORETUM.

Meet at 8 a.m. (reminder: this is the first day of daylight savings time) at the front gate of the Arboretum (9th Ave. and Lincoln Way) for this regular 1st Sunday of the month half-day trip. The Strybing Arboretum is a delightful section of Golden Gate Park, with several "micro-habitats" attracting a varied array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. Beginners and all others welcome. Leaders: Allan Ridley and Helen McKenna. (415) 566-5241.

WEDNESDAY APRIL 8 MINI-TRIP TO SUNOL REGIONAL PARK.

Meet at 9:30 a.m. at the ranger station parking lot inside the park near the green barn. Take Hwy. 680 south to about eight miles beyond the intersection of Hwy. 580. Turn off at Calaveras Rd.; go left and follow the signs to Sunol Regional Park. We may see Lark Sparrows, Golden Eagles, Northern Orioles, plus resident birds of the area. Bring lunch. Rain cancels trip. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301, and Jean-Marie Spoelman \$(*)

SATURDAY, APRIL 11 BOTHE-NAPA VALLEY STATE PARK.

Meet at 9 a.m. at the parking lot in front of the Visitor Center (at right just inside the park entrance). The park is located on Hwy. 29 about five miles north of St. Helena and is exceptionally beautiful in spring; full of birds and wildflowers, but rarely crowded with human visitors. From the East Bay, take I-80 north to Vallejo; take the first Vallejo exit and go north on Hwy. 29. From San Francisco, take 101 north to Hwy. 37 (about 20 miles); turn right on 37 to Sears Point. Go left on Hwy. 121 north and east to Hwy. 29, thence north about 20 miles to the park (or go through Oakland as above: the distance is much the same, about 65 miles total). Allow plenty of time for this drive - it can be foggy and very slow going. The birding will be largely by ear; the walking, about three miles or so, definitely nonathletic. Beginners are welcome. Rain cancels. Leader, Peter Allen (415) 892-8065. \$

SATURDAY APRIL 18 POINT REYES NATIONAL SEASORE TENTH ANNUAL ALL-DAY BIRDING BLITZ

(Joint activity: GGAS and National Park Service). Meet at 8 a.m. at the Five Brooks Trailhead parking lot, approximately 3.5 miles south of Olema on the west side of Hwy. 1. We will bird the Five-Brooks Pond area, Limantour Spit, Drakes Beach, Chimney Rock, and Point Reyes, ending at Bear Valley for a multi-habitat trip that usually tallies over 100 species. Bring water, food, and wear layered clothing for variable weather. Leaders: Leon Abrams (415) 455-9980 (work), (510) 845-4107 (home) and Cathy Purchis (510) 865-9482. (*)

SATURDAY, APRIL 25 MINES ROAD, LIVERMORE.

Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot of the Nob Hill Shopping Center. Take I-580 east and turn right on No. Livermore Exit. Continue south two miles to the Nob Hill Shopping Center at So. Livermore and Pacific in Livermore. From there, we will caravan on mountain roads to Patterson. We can expect to see Northern Orioles, Lewis' Woodpecker, Lawrence's Goldfinches, and Phainopeplas in this habitat. Bring food and liquids. Those who want are invited to continue with the group until dark. Leader: George Bing (510) 445-5868.

Trips marked with a (\$) go to parks or other sites which require an entrance fee. Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked with a (*). See below. Problems, etc.: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, if you have suggestions for trips, or if you are interested in leading a trip, call Lillian Fujii (510) 256-4167, Field Trips Committee Chair.



Nice winter for ducks, wouldn't you say? Even they, however, could use a raincoat and umbrella this year! How are all the birds doing in all this wet weather? Most of them seem to be fine, and I'm sure they are thankful for the number of feeding stations we pro-

vide. I hear people remarking on the large quantities of seed they are using this year. When that sun peeps through, those birds certainly begin to sing. But just how do they stay dry and warm during storms? Thank goodness for feathers!

Feathers are, of course, unique to birds. They are one of nature's most amazing devices because they are so light and yet so strong. They serve several purposes: to assist the bird in flying, to attract a mate, to protect the bird with coloration (as in camouflage), and to retain body heat. In most birds, the feathers are generally waterproof and protect the skin from injuries and sunlight. There are 5 kinds of feathers: (1) Contour feathers define the shape of a bird and have a main shaft and an inner and outer vane; these feathers are moved by muscles and include body feathers as well as those of the tail and wings. (2) Semiplumes combine a large shaft with downy feathers, are small and white, and are hidden beneath the contour feathers. (3) Down feathers are small, soft, fluffy feathers whose main function is insulation. (4) Filoplumes are hairlike, sparsely scattered

over a bird's body. Any slight movement of the contour feathers sends messages via the filoplumes to the skin. These are the ones you sing off a chicken. (5) Powder feathers are body feathers that barely resemble normal feathers. Their use is unclear, but it is thought that they play a part in keeping feathers clean because of their powdery nature. There

are other specialized feathers in various bird species.

Maintaining feathers is one of a bird's most important daily chores. Bathing in either water or dust, depending upon availability, is a daily ritual. Along with preening, bathing helps keep the feathers in peak condition. Birds preen to clean their feathers, to remove parasites, and to smooth

Wine & Cheese, Anyone?

Come to a Wine and Cheese Tasting and Help Us Celebrate John J. Audubon's Birthday on April 26 at the Beautiful Dunsmuir House. John J. Audubon, the incredible bird artist, was the man for whom the National Audubon Society was named. Being French, Audubon undoubtedly appreciated the taste of a good bottle of wine complementing a rich, aromatic cheese.

We think it's appropriate, therefore, that the Golden Gate Audubon Society will honor Audubon's memory by holding a wine and cheese tasting on Sunday, April 26, 1998, on the grounds of Oakland's beautiful Dunsmuir House and Gardens Historic Estate between the hours of 2 PM and 5 PM.

Since the Golden Gate

Audubon Society is mostly for the birds, a wine and cheese tasting being incidental to our true mission of protecting and enjoying our natural world, we will also lead a bird identification walk on the Dunsmuir grounds at 1 p.m. before the tasting.

A donation of \$25 per person in advance (\$30 at the door) is requested. All proceeds from the event will help support Golden Gate Audubon's conservation and education programs. Tickets and reservations should be obtained in advance so we have an idea how many will attend.

Save the date and we'll see you there. You'll get more specific information in the April Gull or for more details, you can call the Golden Gate Audubon Society office at 510-843-2222.

the feather barbs so they will lock together. Preening also distributes oil from the oil gland at the base of the tail. When preening, the bird rubs its bill and head on the gland, gathering the oily substance. In ducks this oil contains a large amount of fatty acid, some fat, and wax. Ducks' feathers distribute air, which seems to waterproof them, but this oil undoubtedly aids their water-shedding capability. If a duck's feathers become matted from an oil slick, the trapped air in the plumage is lost, and the duck loses its buoyancy and cannot stay afloat. Usually waterfowl submerge, then pop to the surface, and the small amount of water they carry with them instantly rolls off. Both cormorants and anhingas have an oil gland, but their plumage can become so sodden underwater in pursuit of fish that they must come out of the water and crawl up on a perch to dry, usually with outstretched wings. So their oil glands don't give them that much protection. A few species of birds (ostrich, emu, bustards, some parrots, and some pigeons) have no oil gland; others (nightjars, nighthawks, whip-poor-wills, and some pigeons) have negligible oil glands. Also, in some birds the oil glands exude a scent during courtship, complicating the issue of just what purposes these glands serve. A side benefit of preening is that it seems to condition a bird's beak along with its feathers.

There are so many styles of bathing, either in water or dust, that it has become one of my

favorite bird activities to observe. A bird with strong feet and broad, short wings wades in, fluffs its feathers, and rapidly flicks the wings in and out of the water. The breast is then submerged and rolled back and forth. Usually the head is thrown back, forming an indentation on its back between its wings. The back is then doused. This routine is repeated several times until the bird is quite wet and bedraggled looking. Birds with weak feet such as swifts and swallows, which spend most of their time flying, will skim a lake, pond, or your pool. As the body is dipped, the tail is raised to direct a spray of water over the back. Flycatchers dive from perches over and over, and vireos combine wading and diving. Wrentits take advantage of dew on vegetation while hummingbirds may zip through sprinklers. Waterbirds and seabirds also bathe with routine actions. I remember watching a Pacific Loon at Bodega Bay doing body rolls with apparent glee. Frequency of bathing depends on the weather. On a hot summer day, titmouses (titmice?) and chickadees may take five baths while in winter several times a week suffices. We can presume that our rain has adequately taken care of local birds' daily bathing! They still must preen, however, to keep those feathers conditioned and zipped up for flight. Meanwhile, we must rely on outerwear and bumbershoots to keep us dry. So, who are the lucky ones? }

Wetlands

Continued from page 1

our stormy winter (actually, it turned into one of the nicest, sunniest days we've had this winter) to pull out the non-native cordgrass so that it won't be able to send its seeds into our new tidal marsh.

It turns out that pulling out cordgrass isn't the easiest thing to do. But we had help and supervision from the East Bay Regional Park District staff and we all had a grand time. By the end of the day, we had cleared about a 30-foot stretch of shoreline of all that nasty cordgrass.

We had fun, it was very satisfying and ... ta da!! we all got to see a California Clapper Rail at low tide walk across the mudflat not 50-feet away from us. No doubt it was thanking us for our efforts.

Mary Schaefer, who organized this event, is planning to schedule another one sometime in the future, and we hope many more of you will join us next time around. It's a really rewarding experience that leaves you feeling that you have done your good deed for the birds.

Our GGAS volunteers were:

Courtenay Peddle, Inge Svoboda, Pat Gannon, Jerry Bowling, Russ Wilson, Jacee McHugh, Gary Mankin + kids, Mary Schaefer, Arthur Feinstein, Dorothy Frantz, Caroline Kim

EBRPD staff:

Joan Suzio-Park Manager,
Agda Pagar }

A Birder's Pledge

by Alan Hopkins

Before dawn Dan Singer, Mark Eaton and I piled into Dan's sports utility vehicle and headed for Alviso. Pumped up with 7-11 coffee and doughnuts, we arrived at the Alviso Marina parking lot just before sunrise. It was the 26th of September, and the days were getting shorter. It had been nearly two years since I'd added a new bird to my North American life list.

We pulled our scopes out of the trunk and headed for "the spot" described by numerous birders over the Bird Box. We were looking for the Lesser Black-backed Gull that they had reported. My heart sank when we arrived and discovered there were no gulls. This was my third attempt to see the gull, and I thought it was going to be a sure thing. As the sun rose, we scanned the gulls bathing in a nearby pond – it wasn't there. Eventually small groups of California Gulls started to congregate, and after careful examination, Dan said, "I think I have the bird!" Sure enough, there was a gull about the size of a California Gull, but with a darker back. The bill was too thin to be a Western Gull, and a red lipstick-like smudge covered a third of the lower mandible. It was the Lesser Black-backed Gull, and my 660 something life bird!

On the way back to the car, I mention to Mark and Dan that the bird was going to cost me 50 bucks. I explained that I had made a pledge to the Golden

Gate Audubon Board of Directors that I would donate \$50 to GGAS for my next life bird and \$25 for each life bird found in California after that. Of course, this just confirmed to them that I was nuts – but I didn't think so.

If it wasn't for the GGAS-sponsored Bird Box I probably wouldn't have seen the bird in the first place. My contribution is a way of saying thanks for GGAS's support of birding programs. GGAS asks for, and receives, donations for our conservation programs, and birders reap the rewards of our conservation successes. Because of GGAS, there will soon be more wetlands for birds at Arrowhead Marsh. With the help of GGAS, Mono Lake was saved. GGAS contributes money to organizations like the Kern River Preserve, so they can protect birds like the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Willow Flycatcher. GGAS is taking on a major project in Alameda to protect the Least Tern nesting colony. There are far too many examples of GGAS's positive impact on California's wildlife to list, but birders benefit from all of them.

For some birders, conservation simply isn't their "thing." I'd like those people to consider what Golden Gate Audubon offers the birding community. I've already mentioned the Bird Box. How many lifers have you seen because they were reported on the Bird Box? GGAS has always offered free field trips. I can still remember seeing my first Lawrence's Goldfinches and Costa's Hummingbird on Art

Gifts and Bequests

Andrea Auer, Robert & Carol Coon, Mary Corbus, Gerald & Madelon Halpern, Toni Langfield, Anne MacPherson, Diane Wilson, Peggy Winter, XTRA Corporation Charitable Foundation

Panama Comittee:

Adam Raskin

Clapper Rail Circle:

Linda Deaktor, Harold Kirker, Margaret & Maurice Zeff

Least Tern Circle:

Carol Hanson, Daniel Luten, Daisy Uyeda

In Memorial:

In memory of Mr. & Mrs. Richard M. Brewer
Mrs. Harley Stevens in memory of Morris Doyle

The Society welcomes gifts in general or gifts in honor of or in memory of relatives and friends. Such gifts will be used as specified by the donor or, if unspecified, at the discretion of the GGAS Board of Directors. This includes their use of general GGAS activities or for special programs of the Society. Please send your gift in the form of a check made out to Golden Gate Audubon Society, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702. All gifts are tax deductible. The Society is also appreciative of any bequests. Such bequests should specify as recipient the Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. All gifts, donations and bequests will be acknowledged in *The Gull*, as well as personally on behalf of the Society by the Secretary.

Edwards' Mines Road trip, my Black-backed Woodpecker and Mountain Quail on Marie Mann's trip to Yuba Pass, and I'll never forget seeing 7 California Condors on Ebbin Macmillan's trip to Mt. Pinos. GGAS also sponsors the Oakland and San Francisco Christmas Bird Counts and co-

Have A Great Time While Helping Us Help Audubon Canyon Ranch

Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) is a conservation organization that now operates three sanctuaries in the North Bay, two in Marin and one in Sonoma County.

It started out when a group of people decided that they had to save an egret and heron rookery in a redwood canyon on Bolinas Lagoon. When they heard that people were planning to develop Bolinas Lagoon they went into action and, with the help of Golden Gate, Marin and Sequoia Audubon societies, the Lagoon was saved and the ACR Bolinas Preserve heron and egret rookery was purchased. In fact, we recently came across a tax paper that indicates that GGAS might have been the purchasing agent and briefly owned the Bolinas Preserve before it was transferred to ACR.

In any case, ever since that time, GGAS has served on the Board of ACR and has worked to make ACR the great sanctuary system that it is.

One of the joys of working with ACR is that you get to go to the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve and see all those beautiful birds preening, courting, mating, laying eggs, incubating, hatching, and then fledging the chicks. It's life, and most of us see all too little of it nowadays.

Well, here's your excuse to get away for a day and experience nature. Become an ACR host. Each year from mid-March to mid-July, the Bolinas Preserve is open on weekends to all visitors. The Bolinas Preserve gets thousands of visitors each year, and we need volunteers to help direct the visitors to the trails, the birds, the

nature museum, the bookstore, and, of course, the bathrooms.

It's a lot of fun. ACR will send you all the information you need so that you will be well informed when people ask you questions about the birds. You'll meet interesting people and provide a real service to ACR. And you get to see the birds and the redwoods yourself (we have enough hosts each weekend day so that everyone gets time to go for a walk and enjoy the preserve).

You will be hosting with fellow GGAS members who are a very enjoyable bunch of people. After all, you're one.

So please call our ACR-Host volunteer coordinator Bill Hering at 415-865-5625 and sign up for spring day at ACR's Bolinas Preserve. We look forward to seeing you there. }

sponsors the Point Reyes CBC. The \$5 that counters pay to participate in the CBC goes entirely to cover the national expense of the CBC. GGAS must pay for all the printing and postage for the counts and for renting the compilation-dinner halls. Even printing the Observations column, the field trip listings, and other birding related text in the *Gull* costs the organization a great deal.

Making a small contribution to Golden Gate Audubon for each new bird is the least I can do to say thanks for the years of service. (It also gives me a chance to boast about my new birds!) I've mentioned that I challenged the Board of Directors to join me in

celebrating their new birds, and I am pleased to say Ann Howard took up the challenge! Ann has contributed \$25 for her new bird – a Yellow-rumped Warbler. Ann probably won't make a contribution for every new bird she sees, but she really liked the warbler and wanted to celebrate it! I recently found another lifer, a Long-billed Murrelet! It was such a wonderful bird, I am contributing \$50 to celebrate it too!

Won't you join us in supporting Golden Gate Audubon Society's birding programs?

Here is what you can do: just send us a check for \$25 or more and mention that your gift is in honor of your new bird. We will

print your name, the bird, and the amount of the contribution in the Gull's Gifts and Bequests column to thank you. You don't need to contribute for every lifer, maybe just the great ones like, Dark-rumped Petrel, Dusky Warbler, Belcher's Gull, or Yellow-rumped Warbler. How about contributing for milestone birds? Or birds seen on GGAS Trips? The rules are up to you.

Send your tax deductible Gifts to:

Birds of Honor
Golden Gate Audubon Society
2550 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702

Good Birding! }

It's New York Audubon Versus GGAS!

Who Has the Best Birders? Who Has the Most Birds? Join and Support Our GGAS Spring Birdathon as we challenge New York to the first Bi-Coastal Audubon Chapter Birdathon Competition!

Every year GGAS joins Audubon chapters across the nation in holding a Spring Birdathon, the goal of which is (1) to have a good time, (2) to see as many birds as possible, and (3) to raise money for GGAS and its education program, "Audubon Adventures."

During our Birdathon GGAS members form teams. These folks go out on Birdathon Day and see how many bird species they can identify in one 24-hour period.

This year we are doing something new and exciting in our Birdathon. We have challenged the New York Audubon Society to see which of our chapters can see the most birds during the Birdathon period. We'll see which chapter has the best birders and the best and rarest birds!

If we lose, we'll send New York some Bay Area sourdough bread. If we win, well, we're still waiting to see what New York can come up with (do I hear lox and bagels?).

How does this raise money for our education program? It raises money because you, our chapter members, can sponsor these teams to encourage them to reach birding heights never reached before. For example, if you sponsor a team at 10 cents per species, and they see 100 species, you will

donate to GGAS \$10. Get your friends, neighbors, and co-workers to sponsor teams and introduce them to the thrill of birding. Or start up your own team and see how many birds you can see.

If you work for a kind-hearted generous company, see if you can form a company Birdathon team and ask your company if it will match your efforts. If you work for a company that has a branch office in New York, see if you can get a Birdathon competition going with that branch office. There are lots of possibilities, it's all in good fun, and it raises money for a great cause, our Audubon Adventures program.

So what is Audubon Adventures?

"Great! Useful! Effective!"

"Very informative and very complete."

"The kids and I love it and learn from each issue."

"They are a great adjunct to my science program."


This is how teachers describe the Audubon Adventures program. This program, created by the National Audubon Society, brings the wonders of nature to children in grades 3 through 6 (it is even used by teachers in higher grades). Every year, each child in a class receives six issues of Audubon Adventures, a thought-provoking and entertaining nature/environment newsletter. These issues contain articles, games, wonderful illustrations, and suggested projects. Teachers receive a companion "Teacher's Guide" that helps them use the Audubon Adventures newsletter.

Birding With Children

Join Stephanie Quick and Louise Harm for another bird trip geared specifically for families with children. This trip will take place at Lake Merritt on Sunday, March 22, at 10:00 a.m. Meet in front of the nature center next to the bird sanctuary. Lake Merritt provides a wonderful location to introduce young birders to local waterfowl, while giving the adult family members a chance to learn more about the huge diversity of birds the area supports. We will keep the pace slow, for smaller legs, and will spend time pointing out basic bird behavior to the children. Adults will have plenty of time for questions. Families with children of any age should feel free to attend. For further information or directions, contact Louise Harm at (510) 845-2482. 

Each issue deals with a specific subject, for example, past issues have discussed mammals, butterflies, endangered species, reptiles, bird migration, etc.

It's a great program. It costs \$35 per class and we would like to subsidize at least 100 classes next year. We could bring the program to hundreds of classes if we raise enough money (an entire school requested the program last year, but we just didn't have enough money.)

So join us and support us in our first ever bi-coastal Birdathon Challenge event. Good birding!! Watch in April's *Gull* for date and time. 

Birdseed sale pick-up on March 27 and 28

It's been a while since our Fall seed sale, but it's time again to order birdseed to feed our avian friends over the next few months. So send in your order, and make sure that there are a bunch of happy birds in your backyard.

Most of our native birds favor either sunflower seeds (chickadees, nuthatches, woodpeckers, white-crowned sparrows, purple and house finches) or niger seed (goldfinches, pine siskins, and chickadees). To honor their preferences, we continue to offer our sunflower and niger seeds at a considerable discount from last year's prices.

Our next birdseed sale pick up will take place on March 27 and 28. If you wish to order seed, please fill out the adjacent seed-order form and mail it to us with a check made out to GGAS, with a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Orders should be received in the GGAS office by Thursday, March 19. You will pick-up your seed on either Friday, March 27, from 3-6 PM or Saturday, March 28, from 9 AM - Noon, at the Golden Gate Audubon Office in Berkeley.

We will have plenty of extra seed on hand, so if you didn't order enough seed, or forgot to order any seed at all, come on down to the office. We'll have the seed you need!

Vollmann seed is the best there is, it contains no waste seed and has been cleaned of debris and dust so you get what you pay for. If you have a question about which kind of seed to buy, give us a call at the GGAS office, 510-843-2222.

The Duncraft Feeder is a 16" long tube seed-feeder, and, as always, we have a variety of hummingbird feeders and a fun thistle seed feeder.

We are also offering GGAS hats. These hats are black, baseball-style caps adorned with our now-famous GGAS logo. They really are lovely, and you'll enjoy wearing them. These hats cost \$15. Please add \$2 for postage and handling if you want us to mail them to you.

Finally, we have beautiful GGAS T-shirts for sale for a very reasonable \$10. These shirts are imprinted with Alan Hopkins' wonderful drawing of a Western Snowy Plover. Again, add \$2 for postage and handling if you want us to mail you the T-shirt, and don't forget to tell us the size you want (M, L, XL).

Remember, your purchases provide an important source of income to GGAS, allowing us to continue our conservation, education, and field-trip activities. We look forward to seeing you on seed-sale day.

GGAS BIRD SEED AND FEEDER SALE
ORDER AND PREPAY BY MARCH 19, 1997
PICK UP FRIDAY, MARCH 27, SATURDAY, MARCH 28

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____
TELEPHONE (DAY) _____ (EVENING) _____

ITEM			QUANTITY	AMOUNT
GGAS' OWN MIX	20 lbs.	\$ 9.00		
	Contains only red and white millet and black oil sunflower seed	50 lbs.	\$19.50	
VOLKMAN PREMIUM	20 lbs.	\$ 8.50		
WILD BIRD SEED	50 lbs.	\$18.50		
Composed of only red and white millet - no sunflower seeds (no squirrels)				
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER SEED	25 lbs.	\$15.00		
	50 lbs.	\$25.00		
BLACK OIL SUNFLOWER CHIPS	25 lbs.	\$24.00		
(No waste!)				
NIGER (THISTLE) SEED	5 lbs.	\$8.00		
FEEDERS				
DUNCRAFT SEED FEEDER 16"			\$28.00	
THISTLE FEEDER			\$10.00	
HUMMINGBIRD (window)			\$10.00	
HUMMZINGER (saucer style)			\$15.50	
HUMMINGBIRD (16 oz. bottle)			\$12.00	
SUET CAGE (2" x 5" x 5")			\$ 5.50	
SUET CAKE (11.75 oz.)			\$ 2.75	
FEEDER POLE (sectional)			\$16.00	
GGAS Hat			\$15.00	
GGAS T-shirt			\$10.00	
SUB-TOTAL				
Be sure to include your check with a stamped and self-addressed envelope.				
8.25% SALES TAX				
TOTAL				
CONTRIBUTION TO GGAS				
Pick up in Berkeley at the GGAS office				
POSTAGE FOR HATS & T-SHIRTS				
GRAND TOTAL				

1997 Oakland Christmas Bird Count Results

Despite a generally wet winter, our 183 field birders (12 feeder watchers) hit the trails, shorelines, hilltops and open bay waters in dry and relatively warm weather to participate in the 1997 Oakland CBC. Everyone reported having spent a great day in the field with some groups sharing some interesting birding stories at the count dinner. Once again, the Oakland count was the most popular in California (based on having the most participants) and

one of the top ten in the country.

Highlights from the 1997 CBC include the following unusual birds: Tufted Duck (seen 3 out of 24 years) at Lake Merritt (great documentation!), Bald Eagle (5 years out of 24) at Chabot, Town of Lafayette, Lafayette Reservoir, and San Pablo Reservoir (same eagles flying around alot?), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (seen for the first time in count history) in the Mills College, Northern Rough-winged Swallow (seen for the second time in count history)

at San Leandro Reservoir, and a Townsend's/Hermit Warbler Hybrid (never seen in count history) in the Orinda Area. We had record highs for the following species: Double-crested Cormorant, Black Scoter, Barrow's Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, Virginia Rail, Black Oystercatcher, Forester's Tern, and Black Phoebe. Our species total of 178 was slightly above the 24 year average.

Another highlight was the participation on the count of students from Jefferson Elementary School. They belong to the Chickadees, a classroom group led by science teacher John Poole. Thanks to John for making all the arrangements for the Chickadees to join us and to the area leaders for putting up with the distraction.

For lowlights, we had the second lowest number of individuals in count history. It is pretty scary that 1995, 1996 and 1997 are three of the four years with the lowest number of individuals in the 24 years for which we have recorded numbers on our count. We had record lows for the following species: American Wigeon, Ruddy Duck (interesting since waterfowl numbers are generally up nationwide), Sanderling, Dunlin, Herring Gull, Mourning Dove, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Northern Flicker, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Northern Mockingbird, Cedar Waxwing, European Starling (anyone sad about that exotic having low numbers?), California Towhee

43rd Annual Mother's Day Barbeque

The Marin Audubon Society would like to invite its Audubon neighbors to its 43rd annual Mother's Day Barbeque. This benefit party for the educational programs of both Audubon Canyon Ranch and Marin Audubon provides funds for bird and habitat protection by teaching children, both young and old, the wonders of the avian world.

There will be grilled chicken, vegetarian quiche, home-style baked beans, salad, French bread, and a light dessert. Afterwards, guests may visit nearby Audubon Canyon Ranch to view the nesting egrets and herons.

WHEN: Sunday, May 10, 1998. Serving time is noon to 2 p.m. Picnic tables will be available at 11 a.m. but you may want to bring a blanket.

WHERE: Volunteer Canyon, 3 miles north of Stinson Beach, 1/3 mile south of Audubon Canyon Ranch, Highway 1. Parking is limited, so carpool if possible.

COST: \$15 per adult, \$6 for children under 12. Reservations are required. Mail checks payable to Marin Audubon Society to Sophie Caldwell, 88 Murray Ave., Kentfield 94904 by Wednesday, May 6th.

INFO: (415) 453-4715

(didn't we used to be the California Towhee Capital of the World?), Savannah Sparrow, and Pine Siskin.

Thanks to the faithful area leaders new and old (some have led their areas for over 20 years!). Consistency and knowledge of the areas produce the best results so we hope our new leaders will continue to lead for many more years too. Thanks to Art for all his support in our Chapter's office

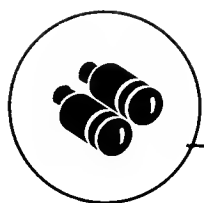
and Jane Larkin and Jean Lucken who collected money at the count dinner. Thanks to William Giddens our caterer for the great food, and Ann Howard who arranged for the caterer and set up for the count dinner. Nick Story helped by making a giant wall chart of species likely to be seen to help us tally our count results. Thanks to John Robinson & John Luther who formed the Rare Bird Committee. Of course

thanks to all who participated in the count and shared their great stories at the count dinner. We hope to see everyone again next year! Mark your calendar for Sunday, December 20, 1998.

Your co-compilers:
Clyde Morris & Joelle Buffa
(510-494-1098)
4251 Tanager Terrace
Fremont, CA 94555

1997 Oakland Christmas Bird Count

8	Red-throated Loon	5	Black Scoter	7	Ruddy Turnstone	181	N. (Red-s.) Flicker	821	Yellow-rumped Warb.
1	Pacific Loon	7842	Surf Scoter	52	Black Turnstone	48	N. Flicker	100	Townsend's Warbler
41	Com. Loon	38	White-winged Scoter	153	Sanderling	1	N. (Yel-sh.X Red-sh)	1	Townsend/Hermit War.
2	loon, sp	755	Com. Goldeneye	4210	W. Sandpiper	136	Black Phoebe	2	Hermit Warbler
511	Pied-billed Grebe	128	Barrow's Goldeneye	554	Least Sandpiper	18	Say's Phoebe	6	Com. Yellowthroat
256	Horned Grebe	1464	Bufflehead	1531	Dunlin	1	Horned Lark	5	warbler, sp
5	Red-necked Grebe	20	Hooded Merganser	263	peep, sp	1	N. Rough-wing Swallow	199	Spotted Towhee
113	Eared Grebe	48	Com. Merganser	39	Short-billed Dowitch.	257	Steller's Jay	448	California Towhee
536	W. Grebe	46	Red-breasted Mergan.	35	Long-billed Dowitcher	512	W. Scrub-Jay	9	Rufous-crowned Sparr.
76	Clark's Grebe	85	merganser, sp	649	dowitcher, sp	147	Am. Crow	14	Savannah Sparrow
164	Aechmophorus, sp	1468	Ruddy Duck	4	Com. Snipe	49	Com. Raven	122	Fox Sparrow
2	Am. White Pelican	507	duck, sp	6	Bonaparte's Gull	545	Chestnut-back Chicka.	220	Song Sparrow
212	Brown Pelican	161	Turkey Vulture	8	Heermann's Gull	140	Oak Titmouse	7	Lincoln's Sparrow
6781	Doublecrest	12	Osprey	1614	Mew Gull	1596	Bushtit	8	White-throated Sparr.
	Cormorant	6	White-tailed Kite	1999	Ring-billed Gull	85	Red-breasted Nuthatch	1071	Golden-crowned Sparr.
27	Brandt's Cormorant	2	Bald Eagle	1606	California Gull	17	White-breasted Nutha.	1287	White-crowned Sparrow
6	Pelagic Cormorant	20	N. Harrier	18	Herring Gull	12	Pygmy Nuthatch	1166	Dark-eye Oregon Junco
44	Great Blue Heron	21	Sharp-shinned Hawk	6	Thayer's Gull	52	Brown Creeper	555	Dark-eyed Junco
49	Great Egret	20	Cooper's Hawk	2527	West. Gull	1	Rock Wren	659	Red-winged Blackbird
107	Snowy Egret	8	Accipiter, sp	20	W.X Glaucous-wing G.	89	Bewick's Wren	26	Tricolored Blackbird
1	Cattle Egret	14	Red-shouldered Hawk	1	G.W.X Glaucous Gull	1	House Wren	498	W. Meadowlark
101	Black-crown N.-Heron	166	Red-tailed Hawk	2	G.W.X Herring Gull	21	Winter Wren	777	Brewer's Blackbird
1	G.White-fronted Goose	3	Golden Eagle	1226	Glaucous-winged Gull	6	Marsh Wren	95	Brown-headed Cowbird
1234	Canada Goose	63	Am. Kestrel	3579	gull, sp	57	Golden-crowned Kingl.	2200	blackbird, sp
2	Wood Duck	5	Merlin	557	Forster's Tern	101	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	92	Purple Finch
1	Green-wing Teal(Eur)	5	Peregrine Falcon	1705	Rock Dove	2052	W. Bluebird	805	House Finch
109	Green-wing Teal(Am)	103	California Quail	685	Band-tailed Pigeon	45	Hermit Thrush	59	Pine Siskin
1103	Mallard	5	Clapper Rail	825	Mourning Dove	172	Am. Robin	252	Lesser Goldfinch
157	N. Pintail	5	Virginia Rail	6	Barn Owl	57	Varied Thrush	146	Am. Goldfinch
4	Blue-winged Teal	1	Sora	9	W. Screech-Owl	24	Wrentit	325	House Sparrow
57	Cinnamon Teal	3602	Am. Coot	42	Great Horned Owl	22	N. Mockingbird	96556	Individuals
361	N. Shoveler	1245	Black-bellied Plover	4	Burrowing Owl	550	California Thrasher	178	Species
157	Gadwall	65	Semipalmated Plover	1	Short-eared Owl	12	Am. Pipit	185	Observers in field
2	Eur. Wigeon	103	Killdeer	6	N. Saw-whet Owl	1775	Cedar Waxwing	12	Observers at feeders
633	Am. Wigeon	167	Black Oystercatcher	75	White-throated Swift	58	Loggerhead Shrike		
622	Canvasback	767	Black-necked Stilt	741	Anna's Hummingbird	6	Eur. Starling		
25	Redhead	57	Am. Avocet	1	Selasphorus, sp	25	Hutton's Vireo		
591	Ring-necked Duck	2	Greater Yellowlegs	24	Belted Kingfisher	780	Orange-crowned Warbl.		
1	Tufted Duck	1937	yellowlegs, sp	45	Acom Woodpecker		Yellow-rumped Myrtle		
6267	Greater Scaup	18	Willet	1	Yellow-bellied Sap.		Yellow-rum. Audubon		
874	Lesser Scaup	4	Spotted Sandpiper	6	Red-breasted Sap.				
7013	scaup, sp	135	Whimbrel	60	Nuttall's Woodpecker				
1	Oldsquaw	919	Long-billed Curlew	24	Downy Woodpecker				
			Marbled Godwit	16	Hairy Woodpecker				



December 26, 1997 – January 27, 1998

After a dry end to December, record rainfall occurred in January, and green hillsides brightened the northern California landscape. Bird activity was on the upswing, with intense territorial displays, some nesting by our resident Anna's Hummingbirds, and courtship displays in several species, including Kestrels and Song Sparrows. Unusual duck species were well-reported, and several rare visitors continued their stays into this period.

Loons to Ducks

The **Yellow-billed Loon** wintering offshore from Lover's Point in Pacific Grove, MTY, was relocated on a Jan. 25 boat trip (MPRBA). The Laysan Albatross that has stayed since late November at the Pt. Arena Cove, MEN, was still present from Dec. 27 (MR) up to at least Jan. 8 (TE). Other, more conventionally located albatross were reported on a Jan. 19 Monterey Bay boat trip, including 5 Laysan Albatross and 5 Black-footed Albatross, as well as a high count of 120 Northern Fulmars for the period (DLSh). The same outing revealed 30 Pink-footed Shearwaters as well as single Sooty and Short-tailed Shearwaters. It was puzzling that no Sooty Shearwaters were seen on a Jan 25 trip in Monterey Bay, the first time this has occurred in 22 years (DLSh). A **Manx Shearwater** was found near the Monterey Peninsula Dec. 30 (per MPRBA). The 11 Tundra Swans reported in December were still at Paicines Reservoir, SBT, Jan. 20 (DLSh).

Single Male Tufted Ducks were reported from 5 locations: off

Sausalito, MRN, for the CBC Dec. 27 (HC), at Sunnyvale Sewage Ponds, SCL, Jan. 2-11 (MM, DvN), at Leo Ryan Park, SM, Jan. 9-21 (RT, AE), near the Lakeville Sewage Ponds, Lake, Jan. 24 (DN), and at Black John Slough, MRN, Jan. 24 (JL). There were at least 7 sightings of Eurasian Wigeons from Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and Santa Clara counties. One wintering Harlequin Duck lingered in the Monterey Bay area, MTY, until at least Jan. 25 (DLSh and MPRBA), and there were 3 individuals at the Fish Docks, PRNS, MRN, Jan. 17. A high count of 7 Hooded Mergansers was at Rancho San Carlos, MTY, for the CBC Dec. 29 (per MPRBA). At least 10 others were observed within Alameda, Contra Costa, Nevada, San Benito, San Francisco and San Mateo counties.

A large concentration of 50 or more wintering Barrow's Goldeneyes was at the L. Merritt outflow channel, ALA, Jan. 1 through at least Jan. 18 (DE, RS, BL). These birds were present with the more "common" Common Goldeneyes, providing a good opportunity for many birders, including this one, to compare the field marks of these attractive sister species. Oldsquaw sightings were also good, with 3 at the Palo Alto Baylands, SCL, Dec. 30 (SR), 3-4 at the Petaluma River mouth, MRN, Jan. 4-6 (AW, MP), 2 on the bay near the Dumbarton Bridge, SM, Jan. 13 (RT), and 2 south of the Hwy. 37 Bridge, SON (DN). An individual of the "Eurasian" subspecies of the Green-winged Teal, a distinctive form in the field and a rare winter visitor and transient (Small, 1994), was observed at

Crittenden Marsh, SCL, Jan. 3 (DW), and another was noted at Shell Marsh, CC, Jan. 9 (GF). At least 8 representatives of another uncommon winter species, the Blue-winged Teal, appeared in Contra Costa, Santa Clara, and Solano counties during the period (MOB).

Raptors to Alcids

Fifteen or more Rough-legged Hawks were reported from eight counties (Kings, Madera, Mono, Plumas, San Benito, Santa Clara, Tulare), with a high count of 6-7 individuals at Sierra Valley, PLU, Jan. 17 (DB). A total of 11 Ferruginous Hawks were seen in Butte, Monterey, San Benito, and Tulare counties, with 5 found over the Panoche Valley, SBT, Jan. 1 (JY). The largest group of Mountain Plovers (up to 44) was still present throughout the period at a traditional wintering site near Panoche Valley Road, SBT, last seen on Jan. 25 (DLSh and MPRBA). The only Pacific Golden-plovers reported were two near Pigeon Pt., SM, Jan. 3 (BS fide RT). Two Lesser Yellowlegs were at Elkhorn Slough, MTY, Jan. 1 (PM) and another was near Jetson Prairie Reserve, SOL, Jan. 10 (LE). Individual Rock Sandpipers were again present in several locations. The bird first reported Nov.14 remained on the Santa Cruz coast until at least Jan. 23 (MOB). Another individual was still at MacKerricher State Park, MEN, Jan. 13 (DT), probably the same bird reported here as a separate individual at Glass Beach last month (thanks for the correction, DT!), and a third was still at Bodega Head, SON, Jan. 12 (GC). Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were found offshore on the Dec. 27 South

Marin CBC and there were 6 Parasitic Jaegers on Monterey Bay Jan. 19 (DLSh).

The probable immature (first-winter) **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, first seen Oct. 13 and discussed previously, continued until at least the end of January at L.Cunningham, San Jose, SCL (CL, MOB). Another **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, this one an adult, was observed at the same location Jan. 8 (BM) and is possibly the same bird previously reported as wintering in Alviso. As noted before, this European species is an extremely rare fall and winter visitant, with few northern California records. Eight reports of individual Glaucous Gulls were scattered over Marin, Monterey, Santa Clara, and San Mateo counties. A first-winter **Laughing Gull** was seen at PRNS, MRN, Jan. 10-23 (RSt, DSc, JL). This bird is the second county record and one of the few California winter records. Another first winter Laughing Gull was at Moss Landing, MTY, Jan. 25 (MPRBA). Two Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen at Van Damme St. Pk., MEN, Jan. 13 (DT), and 10 were found on the Jan. 19 Monterey Bay boat trip (DLSh).

Perhaps the most interesting sighting of the month was the report of 2 apparent first winter **"Kumlien's" Iceland Gulls** at the Coyote Creek Riparian Station, SCL, Jan. 16 (AJ). Whether or not the "Kumlien's" subspecies of the Iceland Gull represents a separate species is in some dispute and is not yet accepted as such in California. The "Kumlien's" form breeds at Baffin Island, and NW Quebec, Canada, (Small, 1994) and is rarely seen in California. A Caspian Tern, rare for the location

Warbler sightings			
<i>Northern Watertlirush</i>			
Dec. 28	Green Valley Rd, SON	DS	
<i>Palm Warbler</i>			
Jan. 5	Pigeon Pt. Rd,	SM	BS fide RT
Jan. 10	GGP, SF	DN	
Jan. 21	Fair Oaks Pk., SCL	BR	
<i>Lucy's Warbler</i>			
Dec.28-Jan.17	Near Sutro baths, SF	PM, LC, JM, TM, AH,HCo	
Jan. 1	L. Merced, SF	DSi	
<i>Prairie Warbler</i>			
Jan 4-21	Guadalupe R., SCL	SR, BR, ST, MM	
<i>MacGillivray's Warbler</i>			
Dec. 29	Pt. Joe, MTY	MPRBA	
Jan. 25	L. Merced, SF	HF	
<i>Prothonotary Warbler</i>			
Jan 2-3,10,25	Middle Lake, GGP, SF	MM, CL, AE, GGP, SF	
<i>Black-and-white Warbler</i>			
Jan. 3-24.	Pescadero Rd, SM	BS fide RT, AE	
<i>Yellow Warbler</i>			
Jan. 24	Moon Glow Dairy, MTY	MPRBA	
Jan. 11	L. Merced, SF	DM	

in winter, was seen Jan. 2 near Alta, TUL (JS). The 15 Black Skimmers mentioned in several recent columns remained at Charleston Slough, SCL, until at least Jan. 10 (DM). One other Black Skimmer was on Limantour Lagoon, PRNS, MRN, Dec. 29 (EP).

Another terrific find was a **Long-billed Murrelet** (*Brachyramphus perdix*), located and photographed off Muir Beach, MRN, during the Dec. 27 South Marin CBC (HC, AH). This NE Siberian sister species of the Marbled Murrelet (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) is a recent split by the AOU/ABA. Approximately 9 previous records of this migratory species have occurred in California, and it has even been found as far away as Florida.

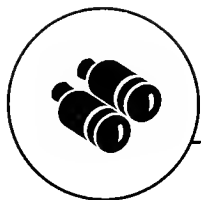
Hummingbirds to Wood Warblers

Allen's Hummingbirds returned right on schedule, with the first

reported sighting of the season in San Mateo, SM, Jan. 14 (PM). Single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were found both in Ed Levin Park, SCL, Jan. 2 (SR, MM) and at Pescadero, SM, Jan. 5 (BS fide RT). Individual Red-naped Sapsuckers were also seen in Ed Levin Park, SCL, Jan. 1 (CS) and at San Antonio Valley Rd., SCL, Jan. 6 (BR). The **Dusky-capped Flycatcher**, an Arizona/Texas species, first reported Dec. 9, was still at Neary Lagoon, SCZ, as of Jan. 21-24 (TN, MPRBA).

Normally this column is limited to northern California sightings, but the Jan. 5 observation of a **Couch's Kingbird** in Fullerton, ORA, which would be a first state record if verified, seems worth noting (BD). The Tropical Kingbird at Miramar, SM, was found again Dec. 27-Jan. 1 (JMo, RT). A Cassin's Kingbird was at the Paicines

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

Reservoir, SBT, Jan. 1-18 (JY, ME). The Paicines Reservoir has become known as a traditional wintering site for the species, with winter records dating from at least 1990. Another single Cassin's Kingbird was seen on Bryant Canyon Rd., MTY, Jan. 3 (MPRBA). The wintering Eastern Phoebe remained at Shady Oaks Pk., San Jose, SCL, through at least Jan. 11 (SR, AE, DS). Two reports of early single Barn Swallows came from L. Cunningham, SCL, Jan. 2 (SR) and off Pigeon Pt., SM, Jan. 3 (BS fide RT).

The **Blue Jay** reported last month remained at Willow Creek, HUM, up to at least Jan. 8 (EG). A total of 35 Mountain Bluebirds were reported from Kings, San Benito, and Sonoma counties over the period. A single Clark's Nutcracker was found on the Pinnacles CBC, MTY, Jan. 3 (MPRBA). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, rare in the winter, was at Panoche Hills, SBT, Jan. 4 (MPRBA). A Northern Shrike, another uncommon winter visitor, was at Briones Regional Park, CC, Jan. 17 (KB). There was a Plumbeous Vireo at Pacific Grove, MTY, Dec. 29-30 (JS). The Fall 1997 issue of the PRBO [Observer] contains an excellent discussion by Rich Stallcup concerning the recent split of the Solitary Vireo into 3 new species. *Vireo plumbeus* is the desert species, which winters mostly in W. Mexico. An individual of the second species, Cassin's Vireo, (*Vireo cassinii*) was also seen off Stage Rd. Bridge, SM, Jan. 3 (GHI fide RT) and is also uncommon in northern California during the winter. Wood warblers were scarce during the

period (see chart). The 2 sightings of Yellow Warblers were unusual, with winter records averaging about 8 per year on the northern California coast (Small, 1994).

Buntings to Grackles

Single Lark Buntings, rare and irregular fall/winter visitors, were reported at Bethany Reservoir, ALA, Dec. 28-Jan. 3 (TS, Dst, GB), and at Panoche Valley Rd., SBT, Dec. 31-Jan. 19 (SR, MPRBA, LC). A male and female pair were then found at the latter location Jan. 27 (BR). The most unusual sparrow sighting was of a Black-throated Sparrow, picked out within a flock of 1000 other sparrows (mostly Lark Sparrows) by astute observers on New Idria Road, SBT, Jan. 13-22 (AJ, LC, GG, DLSh). This is a common sparrow of hot, dry desert, and a rare transient and winter visitant anywhere west of the deserts in California (Small, 1994), and a second San Benito Co. record.

The same San Benito location produced 2 Brewer's Sparrows Jan. 5 (TG). Harris' Sparrow, another uncommon northern California winter bird, was seen Dec. 30 and Jan. 3 at the Pajaro River, SCZ (MPRBA), and at Ano Nuevo State Reserve, SM, Jan. 3 (PM). At least 7 White-throated Sparrows were reported from Butte, Mono, San Mateo, and San Francisco counties during the period. A high count of 200 Vesper Sparrows was recorded in Exeter, TUL, Jan. 2 (JS), with other reports from Kings, Madera, and San Benito counties. A Swamp Sparrow was at the Pajaro River, SCZ, Dec. 30-Jan. 3 (MPRBA, PM), 2 at L. Cunningham, SCL, Jan. 2 (SR),

Abbreviations for Observers: GB, George Bing; DB, Dixie Burkhart; KB, Ken Burton; HC, Harrison Carr; GC, Greg Cipers; LC, Luke Cole; HCo, Hugh Cotter; BD, Brian Daniels; AD, Al DeMartini; ME, Mark Eaton; LE, Leo Edson; AE, Al Eisner; TE, Ted Eliot; DE, Dave Evans; GF, George Finger; HFF, Harry Fuller; EG, Ed Greaves; TG, Tom Grey; GG, George Griffith; SH, Steve Hampton; AH, Alan Hopkins; GH, Grant Hoyt; AJ, Al Jaramillo; BL, Bob Lewis; CL, Calvin Lou; JL, John Luther; MOB, many observers; MM, Mike Mammoser; BM, Bert McGee; PM, Peter Metropoulos; JM, Joan Meyer; JMo, Joe Morlan; TM, Todd Morris; DM, Dan Murphy; DN, Dan Nelson; DvN, David Nelson; TN, Todd Newberry; EP, Ed Pandallino; MP, Mike Parmeter; BR, Bob Reiling; MR, Mike Rogers; SR, Steve Rottenborn; BS, Barry Sauppe; RS, Rusty Scalf; DSc, Don Schmoldt; TS, Tim Shaumerdime; DS, Doug Shaw; DLSh, Debra Love Shearwater; DSI, Dan Singer; CS, Chris Solander; RSt, Rich Stallcup; JS, John Sterling; DSt, Dan Stocbel; ES, Emily Strauss; ST, Scott Terrill; RT, Ron Thorn; DT, Dorothy Tobkin; DW, Dave Weber; AW, Alan White; JY, James Yurchenko

Abbreviations for Counties and Others ALA, Alameda; AMSP, Andrew Molera State Park; BUT, Butte; CBC, Christmas Bird Count; CC, Contra Costa; GGP, Golden Gate Park; HUM, Humboldt; KIN, Kings; MAD, Madera; MEN, Mendocino; MON, Mono; MPRBA, Monterey Peninsula Rare Bird Alert; MRN, Marin; MTY, Monterey; NEV, Nevada; ORA, Orange; PLU, Plumas; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; SBT, San Benito; SCL, Santa Clara; SCZ, Santa Cruz; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SOL, Solano; SON, Sonoma; TUL, Tulare; YOL, Yolo.

single birds at Pescadero, SM, Jan. 2 (RT), at Moro Cojo Slough, MTY, Jan. 20 (MPRBA), and 2 on Lime Kiln Rd., SBT, Jan. 23 (AD). A single American Tree Sparrow was found at DeChambo Ponds, MON, Jan. 9 (ES), and a Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow was at Palo Alto Bayland, SCL, Jan. 10 (DM). The only *Calcarinus* sp. report was a Lapland Longspur found south of Davis, YOL, Jan. 24 (SH). A "Rusty" form of the Fox Sparrow was banded at Andrew Molera State Park on Jan. 5 (MPRBA). One Great-tailed Grackle, unusual in northern California, was at Crystal Springs Res., SM, Jan. 15 (RT).

Say's Phoebe

by Harry Fuller

This small, pert flycatcher can be found in open, flat areas of the Bay Area every winter. Say's Phoebe breeds in the interior of the western U. S. as far east as the Great Plains. The bird first came to the awareness of science when one was shot by Thomas Say along the Arkansas River west of present-day Pueblo, Colorado. The year was 1820.

Say found his namesake phoebe and several other birds never before given scientific description while on an expedition led by Major Stephen Long of the U. S. Army's Topographical Engineers. Say was the chief naturalist on that expedition.

Born near Philadelphia in 1787, Say was self-educated in the natural sciences and was a descendant of John Bartram, one of America's earliest naturalists. Say and his brother were co-founders and leaders of America's first science organization, the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences. Like most of his fellow members, Say was determined to take control of American natural history and get the naming of American species away from the European establishment. To that end, his career was spectacular though brief.

The Long expedition was Say's major field work, as his fragile health allowed little further travel. On that trip, Say and his assistant, the painter Titian Peale, shot and preserved many new mammals and birds. Say himself published the first scientific descriptions of many key western birds

based on his own collecting: Western Kingbird, Lark Sparrow, Lazuli Bunting, Rock Wren, Band-tailed Pigeon. Although Say found all these birds east of the Rockies, each is familiar to us in California.

The new phoebe did not get its first formal description until Charles Lucien Bonaparte published his updated edition of Alexander Wilson's *American Ornithology* (1825-1835). To help his friend with this new book, Say shared all his field notes and specimens with Bonaparte (who got his own gull namesake). In addition, Say himself edited and rewrote much of the added text because Bonaparte's command of English was not good. In gratitude Bonaparte named the new phoebe after Thomas Say. Later the scientific name *Sayornis* was given to the entire genus.

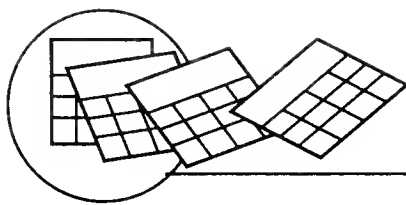
Say cared little about money, and his scientific work brought scant income. He was continually supported by the wealthy Scottish geologist and industrialist, William Maclure. When Maclure became involved in the socialist utopian experiment at New Harmony, Indiana, so did Say. New Harmony was on the farthest frontiers of the U. S. in the late 1820s when Say moved there from Philadelphia. Say's presence brought some important scientific visitors to the that far outpost. In 1852 Prince Maximilian of Wied came with his talented artist, Karl Bodmer. They spent several weeks there specifically to find out from Say what

lay ahead of them on their expedition up the Missouri River. Bodmer's drawings and watercolors are now crucial documentation of life along the wilderness frontier during that decade of rapid change. For the final years of his life, Say remained at New Harmony, ran the printing press, edited the community newspaper, and eventually managed all of Maclure's affairs.

Say had always been known for his honesty, stainless sense of honor, and frugality. This had often led him to refuse financial aid and to miss meals. He always had digestive problems, which worsened in the 1830s, and he died at age 47 in 1854. His widow immediately moved away from New Harmony, returned to New York, and there completed Say's book on mollusks. In 1841, she was herself the first woman elected to membership in the Academy co-founded by her husband 29 years before.

His widow wrote to William Maclure at the end of 1854: "He was the pride of my heart, and the recollection of his virtues shall stimulate me to the exercise of the limited talent which I possess to the advancement of that Science for which he sacrificed riches and health."

(There is a fine biography of Say: Thomas Say: New World Naturalist by Patricia Stroud, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1992.)



March Meeting

Biodiversity in San Francisco

San Francisco offers a wonderful and varied biodiversity. From the ocean to the bay, San Francisco is home to over a hundred species of nesting birds, and over 200 more which winter or utilize the City's parks or coasts during migration.

Though our native plant community has been drastically reduced by urbanization, a forest of exotic plants have been planted which provide food for insects and birds throughout the year. Remnant populations of mammals, reptiles and amphibians still cling to fragments of habitat.

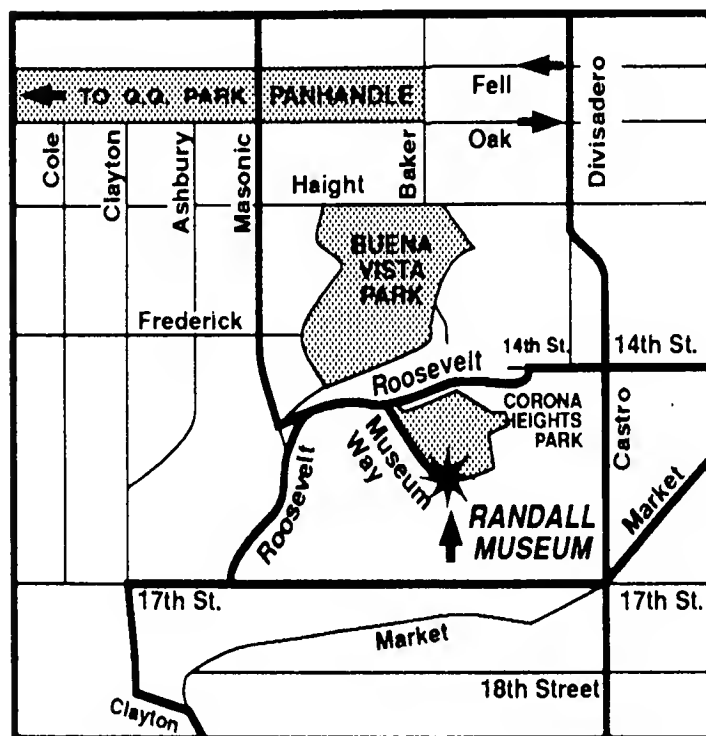
Discover some of this diversity though the slides and insights of Dan Murphy. He will be joining us at our next member's meeting!

Thursday, March 19

7:30 p.m.

The Josephine Randall Museum

San Francisco



ROSTER

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Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702
Phone: (510) 845-2222
Fax: (510) 845-5551

Office Hours:
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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